



2011 AWARD Fellow Faustina Dufie Wireko-Manu

Position	Lecturer
Institution	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST)
Country	Ghana
PhD	Food science and technology, KNUST, 2009
Mentor	Ibok Nsa Oduro, Lecturer Food sciences and technology, KNUST

Research area: Application of the principles of food science to processing and value addition of locally produced food crops, such as root and tuber crops.

The youngest of nine children, Faustina Dufie Wireko-Manu is the second member of her family to get a university degree and the first to obtain a PhD. She is the only person from her basic elementary school to earn a doctorate. “Now, one of my goals is to encourage young women that they can make it if they try,” says Wireko-Manu.

Wireko-Manu thought long and hard about what discipline to follow. Her brothers pushed her to do medicine because of the course’s prestige. “But I was more interested in food science and nutrition, and I have never regretted my decision,” she says. “Food is our basic need. Africa will be in serious trouble if we continue to live the way we are now with declining food production, rapidly increasing population, and choosing imported goods over locally produced food.”

Wireko-Manu plans to work on promoting indigenous foods, such as local root and tuber food crops. When she was young, her family would go to her father’s farm in the village—and she remembers that they ate food then that isn’t often seen anymore. “Indigenous crops are known to be nutritious, but they are going out of usage. For instance, there’s a nutritious food called *tubani* in northern Ghana, but even most locals don’t know about it. You make a paste from dried, milled maize and beans, and add cassava and other leaves and spices. I eat *tubani* in my house, and I want to revive the usage of such healthy, traditional foods and make them attractive to people,” says Wireko-Manu.

Wireko-Manu is pleased when she is able to convince people that a certain food is good for them, and they come back to confirm that they like it. “I think people would return to eating indigenous foods, if they knew how to prepare them and how nutritious they are.” And she is convinced that part of her mission is to research and teach people just that. She believes that upgrading the traditional processing and preservation of indigenous foods will generate employment opportunities in rural areas.

Wireko-Manu used to spend most of her time in the laboratory, but now teaches food hygiene and sanitation, food chemistry, and food service and management to undergraduate and postgraduate students, and

supervises research-based theses. “I also teach sensory evaluation, that is, how human senses are used to evaluate food,” she says.

Wireko-Manu heard about the AWARD Fellowship at a workshop organized by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, and she is confident that it has come at the right time for her. She is particularly looking forward to the science skills workshop organized by AWARD, with a focus on research proposal writing. “I also plan to compete for an AWARD-sponsored research attachment at another institution to further enhance my skills,” she says.

“In Ghana Internet access can be challenging, so networking with other AWARD Fellows and my mentor will really help me.” Her mentor is in the same line of work, and she is excited to work with her. “People are telling me they believe in me—I have accepted the challenge and I know I will do well.”

Wireko-Manu is one of a growing number of African women agricultural scientists who have won an AWARD Fellowship. AWARD is a professional development program that strengthens the research and leadership skills of African women in agricultural science, empowering them to contribute more effectively to poverty alleviation and food security in sub-Saharan Africa. AWARD is generously supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development. For more information, visit www.awardfellowships.org
